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Aristasian Form: Questions and Answers

Aristasian form is the accepted style of behavior in Aristasian society.

The nearest word in Telluria is "etiquette" but the term "form" is closer to what we would say in Aristasia. "Etiquette" seems to imply a special area of behavior, but "form" really means just doing what is right or doing things "the way they are done".

All Aristasians would agree that "Form" is essentially the conformity of our actions to the Harmony of Heaven, so while the old-fashioned Tellurian term "It just isn't done" may seem an inadequate explanation of why one must not do something to a post-modern Tellurian, to an Aristasian it is entirely adequate, because the implication is that it is outside the Way of Heaven – in other words, is enormate (or rude).

The Motherland is a big place, of course, and customs differ from place to place, but each is expressing in its own way a maiden-reflection of the Divine Norm.

Novaryan Form, something of a balance of Estrenne and Westrenne, is recommended for use in Aristasia-in-Telluria, which is a Novaryan protectorate.

Examples of Aristasian Form

How does a maid greet another maid she has just met?
There is a formula for this in Novarya that translates roughly as "please give me your loving indulgence". By a person of not vastly superior rank the same request would normally be returned. This is a ritual formula for initiating a bond of menamity.

How does a younger maid greet an older maid?
The greeting is "Rayati" as usual, but if there is distinct seniority (in years or otherwise) the junior maid will make a deeper and longer reverence. She might say "Rayati

ma'am" (rather than "Rayati Surname") if there is reason to show special respect.

How does an older maid greet a younger maid?
Again Rayati (usually surname, unless the junior maid is a child). She will reverence more briefly and less deeply, depending on the degree of seniority. In some cases, especially if she has a direct relationship with the junior maid, she may not reverence at all. It should be understood that the reason for not reverencing (or indeed for making lesser reverence) is that the senior maid is (as it is said) a "rock" for the junior maid. Senior maids serve their juniors by transmitting heavenly influence to them. This is partly (there are other aspects to the symbolism of the reverence) why the senior maid is relatively or absolutely less "moving" – "Earth moves, but Heaven is still".

How does a maid greet another maid with whom she is acquainted and on terms of equality with?
Rayati Surname. Each would reverence equally.

How does a maid greet a friend?
Usually Rayati Surname-chei (sometimes cheri if the friendship is close or if there is that kind of affection). First name terms are a sign of considerable intimacy (obviously not using that term in the vulgar "euphemistic" sense of modern Telluria). They could hug if they are good friends. They will reverence first though.

How does a maid greet a close friend?
Usually Rayati First Name-cheri (they will very likely use the affectionate suffix). They may well hug.

How does a maid greet a close friend who is substantially different in age or position?
This is going to depend a lot on their exact relationship. The junior may use -chei and the senior -cheri for example, but there are a lot of variables here!

How does a maid who is new to an organization greet the older members when titles are not apparent?
This may be the time to make a point about a rule-bending. Properly it is absolutely NOT done to use an honorific for oneself (eg give one's own name with Miss or -chei). However in our current circumstances it is proper, I think, to indicate our correct form of address.

A new member will, therefore often see the correct form of address in a member's name-tag, otherwise she is likely to hear others using it. If not you really can't go wrong with Miss or -chei and no one will blame you for using the wrong one if you are new.

How does a paxit greet a maid of another estate whom she does not directly serve?
Usually "Rayati Ma'am" or "Rayati Surname". "Madam" is usually reserved for her actual mistress.

How does that maid greet the paxit?
This will depend to some extent on the seniority of the paxit. This may be shocking to some more Estrenne peoples, but in the West the Estates are not as absolute as they formerly were. So, an ordinary maidservant would be called by unadorned surname (assuming the maid was adult), whereas, say, a distinguished housekeeper might be called Surname-chei. However, she would certainly address the maid as "ma'am" to maintain the Estate distinction, even if the maid was young (but of age).

How does a maid greet several maids who are already in conversation?
In a physical setting the new maid will normally enter quietly and make reverence to those present without speaking so as not to interrupt. When she is given rayati (which may not be immediately) she will return rayati. She may join the conversation but should not go off at a tangent with a new topic of her own until the present one comes to a natural end.

In text-based settings she will give rayati because it would be improper to give no greeting and the others will return it. They may very likely continue the conversation, and the new maid will be free to join it – but it would not be polite to divert it with a topic of her own while it is in flow. If she has news she can introduce it at the first natural opportunity, or others may ask her about it.

How do those maids greet the new maid?
The maids present will return reverence (or rayati in a text setting). If they are seated, sitting reverence will be sufficient, though brunettes should stand when a blonde enters and not sit until she is seated, but all will do this quietly and discreetly without interrupting the flow of conversation.

There are various exceptions to this. If the newcomer is very senior, the girls present will stop their conversation and give attention to her. If they have been talking about nothing in particular they may immediately give attention to the newcomer and ask her how she is or what she has been doing. If the newcomer has been away for a long time or is expected to bring news they may also do so. In any case, the newcomer waits for the group to take the initiative (or else waits for a natural lull in the conversation). The main exceptions to this would be if she is senior and has business with the group (or is bearing an important message from a senior)

How does a maid address another maid in a forum thread?
Usually as Honored Surname-chei or Honored Miss Surname (unless the maid is a child in which case Surname becomes first name and with junior paxits the honorific is dropped). When addressing someone – i.e. making a remark directly to

them – "honored" is not only an extra honorific, but serves something of the function of "Dear" in opening a letter as a way of forming the address. Note that we also use "Honored" rather than "Dear" in opening letters unless the relationship is fairly intimate.

How does a maid politely take her leave in a physical setting? (and how should the response go?)
Of course every meeting should begin and end with "Rayati", which is accompanied by a reverence. In formal situations one may express one's regret at leaving and how much one has enjoyed the company. The interesting thing here is that while this CAN be ritual, it also, when things are going as they should, represent the reality of the situation. They are ritualizing ideal relationships. And I am happy to say that among our community these feelings are perfectly genuine and of course it is perfectly proper to do this with one's own words and expressions. Novaryans might become somewhat rhetorical on these occasions. Rhetoric and poetic speech are much more usual. How far this will develop among us, we don't' know yet.

Responses would be in kind, of course, and again we seem to have the ideal relations among us so the "ritualized" nature would correspond directly to the reality, as is ideal.

How does a maid politely take her leave in a real-time text setting?
It would be much the same as the above, only in text.

Does a maid take her leave in forum-based correspondence at all?
I do not think this is necessary though in PMs one usually begins Rayati (proper title) and ends In Amity.

How does a maid apologize for a small unavoidable slight?
This depends on the nature of the slight and what degree of upset may have been caused. Novaryan culture is more a "shame culture" than a "guilt culture" so the avoidability of the slight may less important than the fact that it happened. This is because a breach in thamë has happened whether it was intended or not and life still need to be brought back into harmony. Making deeper-than-usual (for that person) reverence and saying "Please forgive me" would suffice. The other person will doubtless say "Oh, but it was not your fault" and you would say "But please forgive me anyway". The other person would say "Certainly with all my heart I forgive you, but please be assured there is nothing to forgive." To a Tellurian this may have seemed an unnecessary interchange, but it has performed an important ritual function in maintaining harmony.

How does a maid apologize for a small but avoidable slight?
Now having said the guilt/shame thing, which is worth bearing in mind, it is still true of course, that someone will

think worse of you for doing something that you might have avoided. So you will apologize a little more profusely, perhaps a longer-held reverence with "Oh I am so sorry, please do forgive me". The other person will of course accept your apology gracefully and harmony will be restored.

How does a maid apologize for a mistake or misunderstanding that causes pain?
Where pain has been caused a maid will always feel shame, regardless of her actual guilt. Often if it is a misunderstanding, both maids will apologize (since it often takes two to make a misunderstanding). If only one does (because the mistake was wholly on her side) again the other maid will both give her forgiveness (which the first maid will require because of the shame factor) and assure her that there is nothing to forgive.

How does a maid apologize for a more grievous error?
in the case of committing a grievous error or offense a maid will be somewhat mortified and will show that in her apology. Which may take the form of begging forgiveness. In very extreme cases she may make deepest reverence, touching her head to the floor.

How does a maid receive an apology?
Accepting apology is very important in Aristasia. You are likely to receive more apologies than in Telluria since we are an "apologizing" culture. As you will have gathered, this is intended to maintain the harmony of the group, and, by extension, the cosmic harmony. Each little fracture should be repaired as it happens or as soon as possible afterward.

The other half of the equation is, of course, the acceptance of apology, which must be as graceful as the apology itself. Ungracious acceptance (or, worse, non-acceptance) of apology is in almost all cases a worse breach of harmony than the original offense.

You should of course give your forgiveness in the fulness of the measure asked, reassure the other person that she is not at fault (if she is not or if she can conceivably be excused – but not if the offense is clear and unequivocal). In accepting an apology one usually makes reverence. One is playing one's important role in restoring the divine harmony and not merely acting on the basis of one's own offendedness or lack of it. One needs to see a little that this is not just an individual matter between two people but a little segment of the cosmic harmony – the segment you are responsible for.

How does a maid receive a compliment?
One always makes reverence on receiving a compliment. One should also demur from the compliment – saying, perhaps "Oh it was only a tiny thing really" for one's achievements. Accepting compliments on one's person is a little different and generally we do not disparage that unless we want to get into the really Estrenne rhetoric of calling oneself "this wretched creature" and such – which I am

supposing we don't. It seems to me better to simply be very thankful and say "You are so kind" which, without questioning a person's taste allows the interpretation that compliment is due to the other person's kindness rather than one's own attractiveness.

We do very much enjoy each other's achievements and beauty and, while it is important to avoid any hint of boastfulness (which is a disharmonious fault) I think we can enjoy each other's attributes and the respective praise without too much ritual disparagement. This is a slightly radical suggestion so I am throwing it open to the floor. Do say what you think.

On the matter of beautiful possessions, disparagement has to be a little cautious, and in Novaryan practice is usually out of place. An example is that if some one says that something one owns is beautiful and one responds that really it is ugly, one is insulting the complimenter's taste. It is far better to say "It is indeed beautiful, and I am lucky to have such things through no virtue of my own." We should also remember that beauty is not a subjective impression but a real quality, and that all beauty comes from Dea.

How does a maid receive a correction?
Correction should be received humbly and gratefully. It is one of the many occasions when one will often address the other person as "ma'am" or "chara" (or -sensei if one is using the Japanese as we occasionally seem to). When one teaches us, we regard her in that moment as a teacher – for she is bearing instruction from heaven.

How does a maid receive an attempted correction that is not actually correct?
This is awkward of course, and will depend somewhat on what the hierarchical relation is between you. Generally I think one would accept the correction in a not-too-committal way and try to ignore it without giving offense. If hierarchically possible one might try correcting the correction but if not one should mention it to someone in authority, as the proliferation of false instruction really does need to be addressed by someone.

How does a maid politely offer constructive criticism?
Again a tricky question and one partly dependent on hierarchical relations. Usually I try to ascertain whether someone wants to be corrected on things like grammar or spelling (a lot of maids do). Being averse to correction is more of a Pit characteristic, but at the same time it does need to be handled tactfully. If one is hierarchically superior one can gently correct what is wrong and there should be no opposition. If it is a friend one can correct in a spirit of friendship and if a new person in a spirit of mentoring. The important thing is that there should be no hint of using correction to "get on top" of someone. I don't believe anyone here behaves like that (and if anyone does it is a very

serious duty to report it), but it is important also to help newer people understand that our culture is not like that.

Created by: admin. Last Modification: Wednesday 18 of July, 2012 20:30:41 EDT by admin.

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